

## QUALITY TIME V. QUANTITY TIME

We are told studies have shown that, in raising children, “quality time” is more important than “quantity time.” More than one woman has found comfort in this when trying to salve the conscience for hiring a babysitter or day-care while she pursues a career. Without disputing the value of quality time, it cannot replace the amount of time spent. What’s curious is that I have not met even one of these women who would accept this excuse from her husband regarding the time spent with her. ~Al Diestelkamp

# THINK ON THESE THINGS

Philippians 4:8

Volume 37

January-February-March, 2006

Number 1

## WHEN I



## GET OLD

By AL DIESTELKAMP

For a number of years I have been in that time of life that is referred to as “middle age.” I remember well the day that I realized that I was actually too old for that designation—unless I expected to live to be 100 years old. However, nothing has been more effective in illustrating the truth that life is “even a vapor that appears for a little time” (Jas. 4:14) than recently having to apply for Medicare coverage. This has prompted me to write this article, primarily for my own benefit, but with the hope that it will be edifying to others as well.

All of my life I have looked younger than my chronological age. I don’t say that to brag. In fact, in my younger days I considered it sort of a curse. For instance, on one occasion, after I had already fathered three children, I answered a knock at our door only to have the visitor ask me to run get my mother. However, time is catching up and I have noticed more and more, that even young women are beginning to hold doors open for me.

I’ve been wondering about how the latter part of my life will be, especially in regard to my work as a gospel preacher. While there may be some effects that come with aging which will eventually limit my abilities, there are other pitfalls, all too common among “seniors,” that I want to avoid.

There is a danger, after years of preaching and teaching, to become battle-weary. Of course, one doesn’t have to be a preacher, or even old, to need the reminder not to “become weary in doing good” (2 Thess. 3:13). It can happen to anyone, but it is especially disheartening to see an “old soldier” for the Lord lay his “weapons” (2 Cor. 10:4) aside before his fight is over (2 Tim. 4:7).

Occasionally we have witnessed older gospel preachers who, in their younger days,

*Ok! I’ll admit this picture is two years old.*

were valiant defenders of the faith, become “soft” in their old age. At a time when their age commands the most respect, some choose not to preach as firmly as they once did on some moral and doctrinal issues. I don’t think this happens because of a substantial change in convictions, but rather because they have grown tired of being ignored, or perhaps believe it is time to leave that kind of preaching to younger men. I don’t want that to happen to me.

Older preachers have the advantage of many personal stories and experiences which can be effectively used in sermons. Unfortunately, sometimes the stories *become* the sermon, instead of being used as illustrations to support some scriptural point. The result is often a sermon with little substance for hearers to take home with them.

I recall attending a gospel meeting at which an older preacher spent an unusual amount of time simply reminiscing about the past, as part of a rather poorly organized sermon. It was embarrassing. It happened that my nephew, David Diestelkamp, was also in attendance that night. Later I told him that if he ever heard me preach like that he should take me aside and gently tell me it’s time to quit preaching. To be honest, I must admit that since then I have been fairly successful in evading situations wherein he would hear me preach.

In fairness to the aforementioned and unnamed preacher, I only heard him that one

night of the meeting, and it may well be that he simply had a bad night. Not every sermon is a “gem!” Who knows? Maybe it was the kind of sermon I needed to hear to warn me not to become complacent in my own sermon preparation.

Another common problem with older people (including older preachers) is not being flexible enough to accept change even when it is within the bounds of God’s authority. Some change is good. In fact, some change is necessary. We preach the need for change when we preach about repentance, so of all people, we ought to be familiar with change.

Having been young most of my life, I can remember my desire to see occasional changes in worship and work of the church. These were often met with skepticism and negativity on the part of older brethren. When they couldn’t claim proposed changes were unscriptural, they would often resort to saying, “Change for the sake of change is not good,” and use their advanced age as veto power. I don’t want to do that! I want—even *when I’m old*—to encourage young Christians to seek fresh ways to worship the Lord and accomplish His work scripturally. This may cause me some discomfort at times, but the Lord never promised me comfort in this life.

Now, if anyone—*young or old*—seeks changes that are outside of God’s revealed will, I want to be among the faithful who prevent that kind of change from happening. In order to do that, I must “be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord...” (1 Cor. 15:58).

I am not suggesting that all (or even most) older preachers become “soft,” or ineffective. Quite the contrary! There is a host of aged preachers who have avoided the pitfalls I’ve mentioned. I just want to be one of them—that is, *when I get old*.

# Today's Use of Things Written Before

By AL DIESTELKAMP

Recently I was asked why it is that we won't go to the Old Testament for authority to worship God in song with instrumental accompaniment, but we will go there to authorize spanking children. It was noted that there is no mention of that form of discipline in the New Testament.

The question is a good one that deserves an answer.

Within the pages of the Old Testament we find many statements of truth which have always been (and always will be) true. Indeed, the Bible begins with such a statement: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). That is an eternal truth for all ages.

The book of Proverbs contains God-inspired wisdom for all ages. It is there where we learn that if we love our children we will not spare the rod (13:24). It is there where we learn that "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother" (29:15). Though there is no New Testament law commanding us to correct our children by spanking, we cannot deny God's wisdom.

We are right to teach the truth found in the Old Testament. However, we cannot go

to the Old Testament practices and laws for our authority today. For instance, through Moses God made a law that a rebellious son who would not repent was to be taken out of the city and stoned (Deut. 21:18-21). It was a law for the Israelites, but was never intended to be a law for all time. Therefore, we don't teach people today to stone their rebellious children.

There is no denying that King David's praise to God with the timbrel and harp was within God's authority for that time. It is also true that he worshiped God by offering animal sacrifice (2 Sam. 24:25). These were legitimate methods of worship that pleased God during that time, but neither are authorized by God in the gospel age. God replaced animal sacrifice with the sacrifice of His only begotten Son.

Likewise, God has revealed that He wants us to praise Him in "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19). It is no more legitimate to appeal to David's harp for our authority in worship than it would be to cite David's oxen as authority for animal sacrifice today.

While it may be easy for most of us to see through this line of argumentation when it comes to animal sacrifice or instrumental

music in worship, I notice that some brethren are resorting to that same line of argumentation on some other controversial issues. Anticipating the obvious response, they will deny they are going to the Old Testament for authority, claiming they are merely recognizing that "things were written before were written for our learning" (Rom. 15:4). Then they proceed to justify something based on an Old Testament law or practice. Let me give two examples:

In the controversy regarding a second provision of the Lord's supper, some who support the practice will point out that a second provision of the Passover was made for those who couldn't participate at the appointed time. Then, they argue, since Christ is our Passover, a second provision for the Lord's supper is in order. Regardless of what you believe about the second provision of the Lord's supper, this kind of reasoning ought to scare you. It scares me!

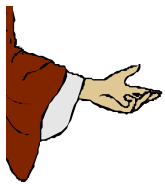
Seldom do they point out that the second provision for the Passover was given only for two reasons—those away on a journey and those who were unclean. I have yet to hear of brethren willing to limit the second provision of the Lord's supper to those two situations. Furthermore, using their reasoning, since the Passover was an annual event what would keep one from arguing that (Christ being our Passover) the Lord's supper should be an annual observance?

Perhaps even more alarming is the fact that some have used the same kind of reasoning regarding divorce and remarriage situations. Lately we have seen brethren argue that since God allowed some to remain in marriages which He had prohibited, those who come to Christ are not required to end relationships that Jesus described as "adultery."

Another twist on the same issue has some claiming that because God required the Israelites to honor a covenant that was made without God's approval (Josh. 9), that marriage vows made by people without God's approval may be kept. It appears John the baptist missed this loophole, and it cost him his head.

This theory allows more than most of the advocates want it to allow. Using such reasoning, polygamists who are converted to Christ would be required to keep their multiple wives, and homosexuals who made a vow to one another to "love honor and cherish" would also be required to keep that commitment.

The Old Testament teaches us many facts and principles which are still true today, but it is not intended as a source for our authority. Therefore, brethren need to quit reaching into the Old Testament to find loopholes for questionable practices today.



## The Master Teacher

By RICK LIGGIN

There can be no doubt: Jesus was the Master Teacher! He spoke with such power and authority that once it was said of Him: "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks (Jn. 7:46). He was, in fact, such a good teacher that people "would get up early in the morning to come...to listen to Him" (Lk. 21:38); and when they listened, they "were very attentive to hear Him" (Lk. 19:48). As the updated NASB puts it: they were "hanging on to every word He said." The point is that when Jesus spoke, people listened! His preaching provoked emotions like amazement, wonder, and gladness (Matt. 7:27-28; Lk. 4:22). In fact, Mark reported that the "common people heard Him gladly" (Mk. 12:37) *Wow!* It must have been awesome to hear Jesus preach!

But Jesus' teaching was not only profound and authoritative, it also must have been impressively clear—easy to understand! It had to be, if common people "heard Him gladly." One does not normally hear a

speaker "gladly" if he can't understand him! No, rest assured, Jesus' preaching was powerful, profound, authoritative, *and* understandable. What a joy it must have been to listen to Jesus preach!

Don't you just wish you could hear the Master Teacher preach? Don't you wish that you could be right there to hear the "gracious words...falling from His lips" (Lk. 4:22)?

Well, guess what? You can! All you have to do is open your New Testament and read one of His sermons! "Oh, but that's not the same as actually sitting at Jesus' feet and hearing Him say the words!" Maybe not, but it's the next best thing. Jesus' written sermons are just as powerful, just as profound, just as authoritative, and just as understandable. All it takes is for you to open your Bible and read! You see, Jesus not only *was* the Master Teacher; He still *is* the Master Teacher! Why not study one of His sermons today!

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# FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN'S SAKE

By ANDY DIESTELKAMP

We are content to serve God as long as it is convenient and it allows us to be happy. But when the will of God has some hard sayings that apply to us or those we love, then we are tempted to tinker with God's will—if not abandon it all together. This is no better illustrated than in the longstanding, ongoing, and evolving arguments on the subject of divorce. As we wrestle with the knotty scenarios that are all the more frequently presented to us these days, we plunge ourselves into God's Word looking for answers. Yet, while seeking those answers we are prejudiced by what we have taught before, confused by the teachings of others, and haunted by the real people we know who might not like us anymore if we teach what Jesus and His apostles taught.

There seems to be a prevalent attitude that—since it is not good for man to be alone—marriage is the inalienable right of all people, regardless of what God has revealed on the subject of divorce and its consequences. Yet, the God that observed that it was not good for man to be alone (Gen. 2:18) also said that He hates divorce (Mal. 2:16).

We would be better served if we spent more time preaching on the sanctity of marriage and the sin of putting asunder what God has joined and less time looking for justification to “marry another.” The “right” to marry another disproportionately dominates our arguments compared to what the Scriptures have to say on the subject. Yea, our technical justifications have us so vio-

lating the spirit of Jesus' teaching that we have crammed enough liberty into Matthew 19:9 to make a Pharisee proud. It is time to take our focus off the exception (which usually does not apply—otherwise it would not be an exception) and start making application of the rule: putting asunder what God has joined is sin as is marrying another.

But what about the “rights” of the victim—the one who was put away without her consent? Jesus said that if another man marries her, he commits adultery (Lk. 16:18). While it is a violent injustice for a man to put away his wife, it does not justify her marrying another (Matt. 5:32). We understand the principle that two wrongs do not make a right, but many, believing in the “right” to marry, make an exception where God has not. “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Rom. 12:21).

Overcoming evil with good means allowing the spirit to rule over the flesh. “Those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires” (Gal. 5:24). The fruit of the spirit is characterized by meekness and self-control (Gal. 5:23). We who live in the spirit (Gal. 5:25) are not dominated by “rights” and our desire to exercise them, but in control of the flesh we humbly submit to the will of God. Thus we must obey God rather than our passions! The desire to marry does not equal the right to marry when God has declared that marrying another is wrong.

In response some have appealed to Paul's “it is better to marry than to burn with passion” (1 Cor. 7:9) as justification to marry another. However, it is presumptuous, in-

deed, to extend to the divorcee the general liberty God gives to the unmarried and widows. This application is especially egregious in light of Jesus' specific prohibition of marrying another to which Paul immediately alludes and concludes that reconciliation is the obligation (vs. 11). Barring reconciliation, one must remain unmarried. There is no liberty to marry another in this context.

Many find the teaching of Jesus and Paul on this subject hard. This difficulty is nothing new; it was the reaction of Jesus' own disciples when he taught it (Matt. 19:10). Jesus' response needs to be seriously considered today. Some are born eunuchs, some are made eunuchs by men, and some are eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake (vss. 11,12). Instead of marrying another, the mind of the spirit is content to be a eunuch in the service of the Lord.

But what about the natural desires? With regard to sexual temptation and the battle of the flesh and spirit, Jesus instructs us to “pluck out” and “cut off” whatever causes us to sin because it would be better “that one of your members perish than for your whole body to be cast into hell” (Matt. 5:29,30). There are eunuchs who are made eunuchs by men! Of course, Jesus is not literally calling for such extreme action as much as He is calling for a self-controlled mind of the spirit that puts the kingdom first. “For I say unto you, that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:20).

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## Reacting to the Charge of ‘Antiism’

By AL DIESTELKAMP

If one dares to ask for scriptural authority for some practice within the church he risks being called an “anti.” That term has been applied through the ages, sometimes in a tone that sounds hostile. Some have hesitated to question innovations for fear they will receive that “branding.”

For some reason I have never considered it an insult to be called “anti.” Even though I know it was not meant as such, I after considering the source, I choose to view it as a compliment. Usually those who use that term do so simply because they don't have good scriptural arguments to offer. However, I suspect that if we look hard enough, we will find *something* they oppose—if nothing else, they are against what they call “antiism,” making them “anti-antiism.”

Another reason not to recoil when so branded is the company we keep. When we look into the Bible we see a lot of “antis” who pleased God—and that should be our goal, not

seeking to please men (see Gal. 1:10). There was Elijah who was “anti-idolatry; John the baptist who was “anti-adultery” (Mk. 6:18); Jesus who was “anti-defiling of the temple” (Jn. 2:14-16); and the apostle Paul who was “anti-women preachers” (1 Cor. 14:34), just to name a few. That puts us in pretty good company!

I suppose, if I had a choice, I would prefer that brethren would discuss their differences instead of resorting to name-calling. There was a time when there was at least an attempt to justify by the Bible what is practiced in the churches. The motto, “We speak where the Bible speaks, and are silent where the Bible is silent” (a response to 1 Peter 4:11) has evolved into hollow words for many of our brethren.

The only real difference between the Lord's church and the churches of men is our dogmatic insistence on proving all that we teach and do by the revealed will of God. When we blur that distinction it is no wonder that others view us as just another denomination among many.

# The Most Unfamiliar Book

By FRANK VONDRACEK

I'll not beat around the bush. The most unfamiliar book on earth to too many of us is God's book, the Bible. The claims the Bible makes for itself are astonishing. It says of itself, "I am perfect. I am complete. I am infallible. I am truth. I am sufficient. I am the very words of God, and as such I am eternal, everlasting, indestructible and powerful" (2 Tim. 3:15-17; Heb. 4:12). Also, the Bible claims to give faith; to guide man's life, to give new life and to lead to eternal life (1 Pet. 1:22-25).

Have you ever tried to count all the blessings given to you by God? It's not easy to acknowledge every one of them because we don't always recognize some blessings until later. While the Bible says God tempts no man (Jas. 1:13), it clearly states that He often tries or tests us. Such times are occasions to gauge our faith, trust and dependence on God. James says that even hard times, difficulties and sorrows are blessings in disguise. These kinds of experiences ought to help Christians to come out stronger in faith and patience (Jas. 1:2-4).

What about the Bible in all this? If you have ever read, studied and meditated upon Psalm 119, you at least know that this psalm is entirely about the word of God and the believer. There are 22 sections to this psalm, one for each letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Each section contains eight verses, a total of 176 verses. But what is more important for us is what the psalm says. I believe once we learn its message, we will be drawn to the conclusion that perhaps the Bible is our most unfamiliar book, for otherwise we would not fret so much when things of life go awry.

Within this psalm we are told about the precepts of God (v.4). The word of God, when hidden in one's heart: helps one not to sin (v.11); counsels (v.24); gives hope (v.81);

is unchangeable (v.89); causes rejoicing in the heart (v.111); is precious (v.127); gives light (v. 130); is pure (v.140); is truth (v.160); and brings delight (v.174). These are but a smattering of the contents of God's word. Don't allow yourself to think that because these are stated in the Old Testament that they don't accurately describe God's word even of the New Testament.

Also, notice that it is in relationship to the believer that these characteristics of God's word are declared. Actually, if God had not created man in His likeness and after His image, stating these things about His word would not have served any purpose. If I cannot freely choose to either use or to ignore God's word, then there would be no point to all that is said about God's word in the Bible.

But when I finally realize that only with the word of God can I be of greatest use and value to God, then will I earnestly and diligently strive to learn as much of God's gracious gift as possible. For it is by means of His revelation of His mind and will that I can know what He expects of me and instructs me to become.

I believe that God dwells, moves, works and abides in the believer (Eph. 3:17). But His means of doing so is by use of His word (Jn. 14:23). Notice Psalm 119 again. There is not a hint of God's presence without the word. There is no power in a believer's life apart from the word of God.

The most unfamiliar book of all is the Bible. This is generally true for people of the world, and is sometimes true of Christians. Now then, don't you just have to know more about it and its message? Read it, study it and meditate upon it. Use what you learn and before you realize it, the Bible will be your most familiar companion and guide. Please consider this suggestion.

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## Making This Paper A Bit More Timely

Through most of the more than 37 years we have published *Think*, it has been on a quarterly basis. For much of that time we have mailed each issue out shortly before the end of each quarter. It is my plan during 2006 to gradually move the mailing date of each issue of *Think* to earlier in the quarter. Hopefully, by the end of the year we will be mailing the paper out in the first month, instead of the last month, of each quarter.

~Al Diestelkamp

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Many thanks to all of our voluntary partners, past and present, who support this effort. We anticipate this issue costing about \$520 which will still leave a surplus of slightly over \$800 for future issues.

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# THINK ON THESE THINGS

Published quarterly in the interest of purity of doctrine and practice by the Diestelkamp family. Distributed free in quantities as ability permits.

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